

Cupid's Arrow©

A Short Story by Cherie Clement

“Uh, oh. Now you're for it. Unca Seth's gonna kill you,” Josh informed his brother as the distinctive sound of breaking glass shattered the quiet neighbourhood, echoed by a woman's cry.

“You did it, too!” Robbie's pudgy hands fisted as he squared up to his four-year-old twin.

“Oh, no you don't.”

Large hands grabbed the backs of both boys' jeans, forcibly keeping the twins apart.

“What are you up to now? I turn my back for two minutes and you pair are fighting again. What am I going to do with you?”

“Stop them playing with these for a start,” an angry voice jerked Seth around, his hands still grasping the twins' jeans. “Are you mad? They could have killed someone!”

Seth gaped in horror as he saw the arrow the woman was shaking at him. His eyes darted wildly until he saw the bow lying in the grass. He sank down onto his knees, drawing the boys against him into the protective cradle of his arms. “You found my bow? Haven't I told you time and again how dangerous it is? It's not a toy.”

“It was a axe-cerdent, Unca Seth,” Josh mumbled. “We didn't mean to shoot it.”

“We didn't do it on purpose,” Robbie's bottom lip quivered. “It just sorta flew off by itself.”

“Thank God no-one was hurt,” Seth closed his eyes as he hugged their warm little bodies close. His eyes flew open again. “You aren't hurt, are you?” he asked the woman anxiously.

“She's bleeding, Unca Seth.” Josh squirmed, escaping his uncle's hold and raced towards the fence.

“Her arm's all blooded,” Robbie agreed as he joined his twin.

“What?” The woman looked down in panic, made an odd sort of sound and crumpled to the ground.

The twins stared in horror, then both started wailing at the same time. “She's deaded!” “We killed her!”

Seth lithely vaulted the low fence between the two gardens and anxiously felt for a pulse in the woman's neck. It beat strongly against his fingers. He lifted her easily, cradling her

against his chest to climb back over the fence. “It’s OK, guys,” he soothed the twins. “She’s not dead. She fainted, that’s all.”

“Are you sure she’s not deaded?” Robbie sobbed.

“Positive,” Seth assured him. “Look, why don’t you help me get her comfortable for when she wakes up? Go find a blanket and cushion whilst I lay her down on the lounge over there, OK?”

Both boys raced off and shortly returned, Robbie carrying a pillow, Josh lugging a quilt across the patio. Seth smiled wryly, but didn’t say anything as he laid the woman gently on the lounge, the pillow under her head and the quilt covering her. It wasn’t long before she groaned and opened her eyes.

“Are you OK?” Josh asked, peering at her intently.

“We thought you was deaded,” Robbie informed her solemnly, his eyes shimmering with tears.

She managed a strained smile as she looked into two pairs of identical blue eyes staring down at her. “I’m OK, I just fainted,” she assured them, her voice a little croaky.

“Would you like some water?” Seth offered.

“Please,” she agreed, pushing herself into a sitting position.

“I’ll get it!” Josh yelled, racing into the house.

“Make sure you use a plastic beaker,” Seth called after him.

“Does it hurt? Is that why you fainted?” Robbie asked, pointing at her arm.

She frowned, carefully avoiding looking at her bleeding arm. “It stings a bit. But I fainted because I’m not good with blood, particularly when it’s my own.”

“Sorry we hurted you,” the little boy whispered. “But I’m glad you’re not deaded. Unca Seth picked you up and I got you my pillow to lie on.”

“Yeah, and it’s my duvet,” Robbie chimed in, walking towards her, carefully balancing a full beaker of water in both hands, which he thrust towards her. “You gonna drink this?”

“Thank you,” she murmured in amusement, managing to take a few sips from the overfull beaker without spilling any onto the quilt.

“Here,” Seth’s large hand took the beaker and placed it out of reach. “I’m Seth Cooper, by the way. And these two monsters are my nephews, Josh and Robbie.”

“I’m Josh, he’s Robbie,” Josh informed her. “We’re twins, but I’m older. What’s your name?”

“Ginny,” she smiled. “Ginny Marsh. And I’m pleased to meet you all. I think,” she murmured quirking her lips.

Seth grinned down into warm brown eyes, his own crinkled with humour. “Don’t blame you. Mind, we don’t usually knock our neighbours out to introduce ourselves. Though....,” his eyes softened in appreciation as they roved over her heart-shaped face, “it does have its merits sometimes.”

Ginny’s face heated as she stared up at him. Like his nephews, Seth’s eyes were blue, but his were darker, sensuously warm as they held her own. Flustered, she lowered her gaze. Robbie tugged at his uncle’s arm. “The blood’s stopped,” the little boy said.

“What? Oh, yeah.” Seth bent his head, gently lifting her arm to check. “Feeling brave enough to have a look?” he asked.

“Not if I don’t have to,” she replied with a grimace.

“Want me to clean it up?”

“Please,” she murmured.

“I’ll just get the first-aid stuff.”

“I’ll get it,” Josh yelled.

“Me, too. I know where it is.”

“Of course you do,” Seth rolled his eyes as Robbie raced off after his twin. “They know where everything is, including things I thought were out of their reach.”

“Like your bow?” Ginny suggested.

“Yeah, like my bow. Sorry about that.”

“No harm done,” she shrugged. “The arrow didn’t come anywhere near me. I probably cut myself on a bit of broken glass from the greenhouse.”

“Thanks for being so understanding. The boys are mischievous little devils, but they wouldn’t deliberately set out to hurt anyone. Well – except each other maybe,” he gave a wry grin as he recalled how many times he’d had to drag them apart in the past few hours.

“Thanks, guys,” Seth took the first-aid kit from his nephews. “Sing out if I hurt you,” he instructed, smiling at Ginny as he gently brushed aside a few silky brown strands that had escaped from her loose braid before carefully swabbing her arm with antiseptic.

With two curly blond heads and two pairs of bright blue eyes watching in fascination as their uncle cleaned up the cut on her arm, Ginny felt brave enough to glance in that direction herself. Seth’s dark blond waves ruffled in the slight breeze and his eyes were lowered as he concentrated on his task. His touch was gentle on her skin, sending an unmistakable shiver through her. Ginny’s eyes roved over his features and her pulse quickened as she gazed at his

mouth. Full, firm, well-defined lips softened as he dipped his head and pressed a soft kiss against her arm. “There, all better,” he murmured, looking up at her through his lashes.

Ginny distinctly felt her heart drop into free-fall before it began to gallop. Little bolts of heat zinged up her arm from where his lips had touched her skin. Gradually she became aware of voices breaking through her daze. “Sorry, what?” Ginny tore her gaze away from Seth to concentrate on his nephews.

“There was glass in your arm,” Josh repeated. “So we didn’t shoot you with the arrow.”

“Nuh-uh,” Robbie agreed. “It wasn’t our fault.”

“Well, not really,” she gently disagreed with them. “The arrow broke the glass in my greenhouse and I cut my arm on the broken glass so, although you didn’t shoot me, it was your fault that I got hurt.”

“Oh.” Two little boys looked at her arm, looked at each other, and shrugged their shoulders glumly. “Sorry,” they said in unison.

“Do we hafta fix the greenhouse?” Josh asked.

“Well,” Ginny began, but Robbie broke in anxiously.

“We’re too little but Unca Seth can fix it.”

“Yeah,” Josh boasted. “Unca Seth can fix anything. He’s gotta suckshun firm.”

“Suction firm?” Ginny asked, trying not to laugh.

“Construction firm,” Seth corrected, his own lips twitching.

“That’s what I said,” Josh said indignantly. “So do you want Unca Seth to fix it?”

“Well, I was thinking about knocking it down,” Ginny replied.

“I can do that for you. Though not with a bow and arrow.” Seth smiled at her, glad of the opportunity to get to know his rather lovely new neighbour. “I wouldn’t want you to cut yourself again, even if it means I do get to kiss it better.”

Ginny blushed at the gleam in his eyes, conscious of the twins’ presence. The boys shared a glance and trooped off to fetch Seth’s bow. She watched in amusement as they sheepishly handed both bow and arrow to their uncle with a murmured apology. Blond-haired and blue-eyed though they might be, the twins were much too mischievous to be taken for angels. But Cupids? Now, that might be a totally different matter.

The End